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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2008

In Today's Papers

AKP's Iyimaya: Parliament Should Suspend Constitutional Court Ruling

All papers report AKP member Ahmet Iyimaya, head of parliament's justice committee, has proposed suspending the Constitutional Court's headscarf ruling, saying the court "overstepped its authority and violated the constitution." In "AKP Seeking Ways to Stop the Constitutional Court," liberal Radikal reports Iyimaya has offered to pass constitutional reforms which would empower the parliament to suspend the rulings of the Constitutional Court. In a written statement he released Monday, Iyimaya said the decision of the Constitutional Court on the headscarf reforms was an indication of a "Constitutional Court crisis" in Turkey. He accused the Court of undermining the legislative powers of the parliament. According to Iyimaya's proposal, once a Constitutional Court decision is annulled by the parliament, the Court will not be able to reconsider the issue for five years.

Opposition CHP deputy group chief Hakki Suha Okay responded to the proposal by saying the AKP was trying to "seize the control of the judiciary," adding sarcastically that the AKP should have proposed the abolishment of the Constitutional Court as well. Opposition MHP deputy chair Mehmet Ekici warned, "The proposal may pave the way for giving parliament the power to control judicial decisions." Pro-Kurdish DTP lawmaker Hasip Kaplan said Turkey needed a new constitution that included judicial reforms.

Prime Minister Erdogan is expected to break his five-day silence at his party group meeting in parliament today. Erdogan has not spoken publicly since last week's Constitutional Court decision regarding headscarf reforms. Erdogan is expected to unveil his new strategy in today's AKP party meeting. Papers speculate Erdogan will wait for the outcome of the closure case, propose early elections, or opt for constitutional reforms. Papers expect Erdogan to stress today that the court ruling targets not only the AKP, but the entire parliament, and that the problem should be resolved in the parliament. Leftist Taraf comments Erdogan was not likely to give up his "exaggerated optimism" that the AKP would not be closed. A

column in mainstream Vatan says Erdogan could respond strongly to the closure case in his address to the AKP group today, but was not likely to "openly confront the regime."

EDITORIAL OPINION: The Constitutional Court Decision Aftermath

"On The Subject Of Ignoring This..."

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah (6/10): "In democracies, sovereignty solely belongs to the people. In Turkey, this fundamental right was taken from the people by military coups in 1960 and 1980, respectively. Some legal experts today argue that the Constitutional Court's decision regarding turban resembles such previous interventions. During last year's presidential elections, the Constitutional Court became a controversial institution due to its politically motivated decision to require a quorum. Since then, the Court's status, as well as the system of checks and balances, is up for debate. The recent proposal by a ruling AKP lawmaker brings a new dimension to the current debate. His offer includes a constitutional amendment to suspend the Court's decision. AKP members believe that, given the current situation, the political system should enhance parliament's legislative and representative functions. However, suspending the Court's decision will be an intervention against the judiciary, and this will further damage the system of checks and balances. It seems the debates will never come to an end until a comprehensive constitutional change is achieved through a vast consensus. We have to resolve this debate as quickly as possible within the confines of a legitimate and a consensus-seeking process."

"The Main Court of Suspicions"

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Tamer Korkmaz wrote in Islamist leaning Yeni Safak (6/10): "It is obvious that the Constitutional Court has violated more than one article of the Constitution, and by annulling the parliament's decision it has exceeded its mandate. Given the current approach, the Court from now on is capable of taking over parliament's role because every amendment can be reviewed by the Constitutional Court."

In practice, this can be called a judicial coup and nothing else. It is not about the supremacy of law; it is all about undertaking a coup by violating the law. The supporters of the status quo are no longer capable of arranging a military coup, and therefore they have intensified their efforts to block a civilian constitutional review process. When CHP leader Baykal warned against changing the constitution with the argument that the time and climate is not right, he in fact was expressing the status quo's opinion. A civilian constitution is what Turkey needs and it is going to happen regardless of efforts to the contrary."

Toptan: Senate Could Filter Referrals to Constitutional Court

All papers report Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan said Monday he did not understand why he was being "punched from the left to the right" for suggesting a bi-chamber parliament in order to prevent future political crises caused by high court decisions. Toptan said the Constitutional Court's workload was excessive. "I think the fewer conflicts referred to them, the better it would be. I'm merely suggesting minimizing the necessity of taking issues to the court. The senate could be a filter on the path leading to the Constitutional Court."

Over the weekend, Toptan suggested Turkey discuss drafting a new constitution and adding a senate chamber to Parliament. He also said he planned to bring together all political party leaders to discuss the Constitutional Court decision on turban reforms.

Cicek: Senate Not on Our Agenda

All papers report government spokesman Cemil Cicek said Parliamentary Speaker Koksal Toptan's proposal to create a senate was not on the government's agenda at the moment. According to Cicek, "The government expected the parliament speaker to criticize the judiciary's violation of parliamentary authority." Cicek talked to the press after a cabinet meeting Monday and said, "This is not a problem for the AKP alone, it is a question of the principle of the separation of powers," and, "There has been an infringement against the authority of parliament. Parliament's area of responsibility

has been narrowed." In addition, Cicek noted, "Before we consider a senate proposal, we first need to address the broader questions regarding Turkey's democracy." Cicek dismissed the suggestion that there had been any disagreement with the parliament speaker.

Kurdish Families Are Going to The European Court of Human Rights
Sabah, Zaman, Cumhuriyet: The London-based Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP) will file a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights regarding the military operations Turkey launched against the PKK in northern Iraq earlier this year. Reportedly, KHRP will speak on behalf of Iraqi villagers who claim they lost their homes during the operations and thus deserve compensation from Turkey. KHRP director Kerim Yildiz argued that there were civilian deaths during the Turkish bombardment, which damaged many houses and demolished and agricultural lands."

Tuzla Workers Preparing for Strike
Sabah, Taraf, Bugun, Star and others: During the funeral of a worker who died in an accident at Tuzla shipyard on Sunday, labor unions announced that shipyard workers will strike on June 16 to protest unsafe working conditions at the shipyard. One union member said "Almost every day one of us dies at the shipyard. On the 16th we will say 'Instead of killing us one by one, here we are, kill all of us together.' This is the first time in the world that workers are going on strike so they will not have to die." Leftist Taraf reports that, due to the very slow judicial process, most of the time families of the victims prefer to take compensation offered by

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the employers (not more than 60 thousand YTL) instead of waiting for the completion of their court cases.

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- President Abdullah Gul will visit Croatia on June 10-12 to meet President Stjepan Mesic, the Croatian Parliament Speaker and the Prime Minister.
- A parliamentary delegation from Turkish Cyprus traveled to Brussels on Monday to attend European Parliament meetings.
- Turk Telekom director Paul Doany said the number of ADSL users in Turkey was expected to climb to 6 million by the end of the year.
- A gendarme soldier died when he stepped on a PKK-laid land mine in Semdili town of Hakkari. Also, three PKK members were killed in clashes with Turkish security forces in the Munzur valley of Tunceli.

International News

- The second round of indirect peace talks between Israel and Syria will be held this week in Istanbul.
- Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia welcomes dialogue between the two sides in Cyprus and will actively support efforts aimed at its successful completion.
- President Bush is in Slovenia for an EU-US summit on climate change, trade and foreign policy.

WILSON